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ABSTRACT

In this study, the interaction of undergraduate specialization, diversified career choices, and teacher education on the future of professional preparation in physical education was examined. Using the Delphi methodology, a panel of 69 national leaders in the field of physical education developed extensive strategic planning data for the management of six probable, but undesirable future trends. To challenge these negative predictions, a review of this data provided the following set of tactics: (1) rediscover the intrinsic value of movement; (2) encourage students to discover for themselves the intrinsic value of movement and motor skills acquisition; and (3) emphasize the individual achievement available through purposeful movement, be it fitness, personal control, or meaning. An emphasis on individual accomplishment, right, and responsiblity can be used to guide decisions regarding the complex managerial and role disparity issues that will characterize the future of physical education. (JD)

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The Bad News: Undesirable Futures are a Possibility in Professional Preparation*

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Abstract

The Delphi methodology is a multi-round questionnaire used to generate a consensus of experts on a particular issue. In this study, the interaction of undergraduate specialization, diversified career choices, and teacher education on the future of professional preparation in physical education was examined. Sixty-nine national leaders contributing to the growing body of curricular research in physical education agreed to participate. Eighty-five percent completed all three rounds of the study. Quantitative measures of group responses including measures of central tendency and standard deviation were analyzed regarding the probability and desirability of 91 item/events that could characterize the future of physical education. Of the futurities delinated by the panel, fully 20% were determined to be undesirable. Six of the least desirable, most probable future item/events were selected for further study. Qualitative analysis of these item/events resulted from the extensive strategy formation by the panel on how to best discourage or manage the development of the undesirable futurities. These undesirable futurities included large high school physical education class enrollments, conflicts within the teacher/coach and the high school athletic program, and the fiscal restraints affecting specialization and supervision in professional preparation programs. From the strategies developed by the panelists for each undesirable item/event, recurring management strategies were derived. Notable diverging strategies were also reported.

The Bad News:
Undesirable Futures are a Possibility in
Professional Preparation

Anticipating and planning for change has emerged as one of the most critical challenges facing our profession. Accordingly, forecasting, the process of using past and current information to project the future, has become an important organizational planning tool (Donnelly, Gibson, & Ivancevich, 1984). Futuristic research has been maligned in the past with critics citing lack of immediate verification and the inability to rule out intervening, uncontrollable, or unpredictable variables as irremediable shortcomings.

Richardson (1981), however, argued that "the basic intent of future research was to motivate people to think about and plan for the most desirable future . . ." Adelson and Aroni (1975) agreed:

> To the extent that the future is open to human control, information about people's images of the future is likely to be useful in dealing with both the present and the future.

McHale (1974) described the extent of our control:

> The future of the future is, therefore, what we determine it to be, both individually and collectively. It is directly related to how we conceive of its possibilities, potentials, and applications.

Both critics and proponents of forecasting may have missed the utility of futures research. Throughout history people have tried to project and plan for the future. The choice, it seems, has always been whether or not to attempt to structure or systematize this desire to plan for the future.

Recently scientists/scholars interested in planning have utilized the procedures of survey research to systematically ascertain and plan for the future. One of several

widely acceptable planning tools, the Delphi technique is designed to make forecasts and to assist in understanding the possible alternative futures. The most common methodology is a multi-round questionnaire used to generate a consensus of experts on a particular issue. The Delphi is an improvement over conventional surveys in that experts comprise the panel and the multi-round format produces a more accurate picture of the future. This versatile methodology has been used by scholars in education, the military, business, and urban affairs.

Method

Subjects

The Delphi technique makes no attempt at random selection of participants. On the contrary, the Delphi technique requires expertise in the area to be examined. Persons with expertise in the subject area under study were asked to participate in a Delphi study designed to forecast the future of undergraduate preparation in physical education. Expertise was developed through experience and professional service in the area under investigation. For this study, in addition to technical expertise, it was deemed necessary for the members of the panel to possess sufficient leadership ability to assume an active role in shaping the direction or scope of teacher preparation in physical education. A list was prepared of national leaders in the area of professional preparation. This list of nationally prominent physical educators was supplemented by others writing in the area of teacher education and professional preparation in physical education. Members of the editorial review board of the Journal of Teaching in Physical Education (JTPE) not identified by either of the two previous methods were also included. Sixty-nine persons agreed to participate.

Instrument

The instrument used in this study consisted of a three-round questionnaire. The traditional technique was modified to overcome two shortcomings identified by Cetron

(1969). Following Cetron's recommendations to provide sample projections, statements for the first round were gleaned from literature pertinent to professional preparation. The last page of the first round questionnaire requested additional statements that the respondent deemed relevant to the future of professional preparation in physical education. The final questionnaire included 91 item/events. In each round participants were asked to provide additional information. In round two, demographic information was requested. In the third round, the panel was encouraged to suggest strategies and techniques to promote the desirable trends identified in the previous rounds. In this round panelists were also asked to develop strategies to inhibit or manage the development of undesirable futures that seemed probable.

Tabulation

Participants were asked to respond to each of the item/events in four ways. A seven-point Likert-type scale was used to indicate the probability and desirability of the event's occurrence. The panel was asked to indicate whether or not the event was more likely to occur before or after a target data established at 2000 AD. A seven-point Likert-type scale was also used to get an indication of the participants' confidence/competence in their ability to make the first three responses.

To simplify discussion, the following categories were used: responses of one, two, and three were grouped as low; means of four and five were grouped as moderate; and means of six and seven were grouped as high responses to the questions of probability, desirability, and confidence/competence.

In keeping with the Delphi technique, measures of central tendency and dispersion including means and standard deviations were used to provide feedback to the respondents. Tabulation of all responses was completed during the SAS package. Computed results include means, standard deviations, raw score frequencies, and target date percentages.

Results

The eighty-five percent return rate exceeded any reported return rate for a mailed Delphi survey. Of the 91 item/events, 83% were perceived to be at least moderately probable. Overall, the panel seemed confident/competent to make projections with 99% of the confidence/competence means moderate or high. Table 1 summarizes the percentages of each of the seven possible responses to the three aspects of the study: desirability, probability, and confidence/competence.

Table 1 about here

Of the futurities delineated by the panel, 17% were appraised as undesirable. Six of the least desirable, most probable item/events were selected for further study. The data presented in Table 2 show the probability, desirability and confidence/competence ratings of each of the six undesirable events selected for strategic planning.

Table 2 about here

Discussion

In round three, panelists were asked to describe strategies to inhibit or manage the development of six undesirable projections. All six item/events generated extensive strategy formation and thirty to fifty percent of the respondents (depending on the item) chose to complete the strategic planning portion of the questionnaire. From the strategies for each item/event, the most frequently occurring strategies were clustered and summarized. Notable diverging strategies were also reported.

For the purpose of discussion, the six undesirable futurities were categorized as managerial or role disparity issues. The managerial issues included: fiscal restraints

resulting in a reduction in the number of undergraduate specializations, budget cuts affecting the supervision of field-based programs, and a continuation of large high school physical education enrollments. There were also issues related to the nature of physical education and athletics. These trends included: the role conflict within the teacher/coach, the continued dominance of sport on the physical well-being scene, and the increasing use of athletics for nationalistic and propagandistic purposes.

Limits on the number of specialized programs due to fiscal restraints were determined to be undesirable but probable by the panel. Several strategies to deal with this future were forthcoming. One group of strategists suggested a return to the preparation of generalists at the undergraduate level. Although certain universities should have specialized programs to enhance research, the numbers of such programs would not be great. Public school teachers and most college teachers need to be more generalist in their orientation. One respondent suggested that the problem is not fiscal as much as it is conceptual. Teacher education should stress more "whys" instead of "how-tos." This emphasis on "why" would prepare students for different career objectives. One respondent suggested a single liberal art program at the undergraduate level with specialization supervised on the job.

Another possible strategy suggested by respondents was some system of fees and/or charges for specialized programs. Several respondents indicated that this was already the policy in service programs and some specialties. Other sources of income mentioned by the panelists included external funding, supplemental legislative support, and alliances with business and industry.

Although a reduction in the number of undergraduate specializations was perceived to be undesirable, the third-round strategists did not see it in such a dismal light. On the contrary, several panelists viewed this probable future to be desirable and a way to capitalize upon strengths while increasing the quality of surviving programs. Some

called for limits on the number of institutions offering professional preparation programs. More prevalent was the notion of existing professional preparation programs limiting the number of specialization to a few high quality offerings. In light of the panelists' expertise in teacher preparation, it was interesting to note that two respondents suggested that the elimination of certification programs would allow the retention of other options.

Most likely numerous specialized programs will be increasingly limited to the large schools with multiple funding sources. Smaller schools will likely opt for one of two modes of undergraduate preparation: an assertively generalist orientation or extremely limited specialization options supported by external agencies (i.e., armed forces fitness option near a military instillation).

Another fiscal issue affecting professional preparation dealt with the effects of declining fiscal support and the supervision of fieldbased programs. Although it was perceived by the panel to be undesirable, the probability of budget cuts affecting the supervision of field-based programs was moderately high. The most frequently cited strategy shifted a greater amount of the supervisory role from the University coordinator to the on-site teacher. The funding and training of supervisors were problematic, but the trend was clear. Several respondents recognized the opportunity for recruiting field-based supervisors into graduate pedagogy programs. From this would come a cadre of collaboratively trained personnel to ensure the quality of supervision. The only other strategy to consistently emerge from the panel involved peer supervision or self-evaluation.

Regardless of who assumes responsibility for the supervision of students in school-based programs, it seemed clear that professional preparation in physical education will be forced to adopt an austerity measure from business and reduce the number of administrative levels.

Large (40+ students) high school physical education classes were the third undesirable, probable managerial challenge referred to the panel for strategic planning. Political activism to reduce class size seemed to be a popular starting part. Many responded with some variation of the "physical education as dumping ground for curricular loose ends" theme and suggested an educational effort from within our own ranks through school administrators and legislators. Our promotional "trump" card was perceived by these strategists to be fitness and lifestyle management rather than team sports and athletics.

The other recurring strategy reflected some level of resignation to continuing large class sizes. This group of strategists called for teacher preparation to prepare students to manage large classes more effectively. Peer teaching, individualized instruction, self-checking and ability grouping were suggested as appropriate techniques to be taught in undergraduate programs.

Lastly, declining enrollments and fiscal constraints, or some combination of both, were posed as solutions to the problems. On a more positive note, if elective programs and club sports were allowed as substitutions for certain physical education classes, class size would decrease.

The three remaining item/events that were selected for strategic planning can all be grouped as role disparity issues. The strategy formation was extensive though not as extensive as that related to the more tangible managerial concerns of undergraduate teacher preparation. It was clear, however, that each of the following three issues were perceived to negatively interact with the future of professional preparation in physical education.

The panel viewed the role conflict affecting teacher/coach as undesirable and likely to continue. The strategists were less uniform in their choice of management strategies for this trend. Two distinct orientations evolved. One group of strategists

called for a separation of physical education and athletics. Different professional preparation programs, certification standards, staffing patterns and compensation packages were described as techniques to use in separating professionals in physical education and athletics. The other group of strategists called for a redefinition of the relationship between physical education and athletics, rewards for teaching as well as coaching, and a de-emphasis on winning. Several respondents commented on the complexity of the issue, but made no further suggestions.

Though considered probable, the continued dominance of sports in the physical well-being scene was viewed as undesirable by most of the respondents. Almost all remarked that sports in some way reflected societal preferences. Although few viable strategies were forthcoming, several comments are worth mentioning. One panelist pointed out that sport was one of the few "in" things of which parents approved. A popular suggestion was to provide sports for all, and to let sport dominate. There was considerable support for sport as the thing. Perhaps exploring other than competitive models within a sports framework could prove to be a viable management tactic.

The last item/event to be reviewed here: athletics to increasingly used for nationalistic and propagandistic purposes, is important as long as the public and administrators persist in viewing physical education and athletic competition as more or less synonymous. The use of athletics for nationalistic and propagandistic purposes was viewed as undesirable, but inevitable. In essence, the group agreed that nationalism and propaganda have always been a part of sport. The most often cited management tactic was a concerted effort to increase the awareness of and interest in the intrinsic value of sport. Many respondents pointed to the Olympics as the best place to de-nationalize sport and return the emphasis to individual achievement. Several panelists suggested the Olympism Movement (with its emphasis on values and existing curricular support) as a potent tool for physical educators.

The future of physical education is full of challenges and the future of professional preparation in physical education, as determined by a panel of 69 national leaders, is not all positive. Forewarned, however, is forearmed. This panel developed extensive strategic planning data for the management of six probable, but undesirable future trends. In a very real sense, the future is now as each of these issues to some extent present a daily challenge. After reading and reviewing all the data generated by this panel of physical educators, this writer suggests the following tactics to challenge the future. Rediscover the intrinsic value of movement. Encourage students to discover for themselves the intrinsic value of movement and motor skills acquisition. Emphasize the individual achievement available through purposeful movement be it fitness, personal control, or meaning. An emphasis on individual accomplishment, right, and responsibility can be used to guide decisions regarding the complex managerial and role disparity issues that will characterize the future of physical education.

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Table 1

Percentages of Responses to the 91 Item/Events Developed by the Delphi Panelists

	Percent Responding		
	Low[a]	Moderate[b]	High[c]
Desirability	17	39	44
Probability	13	83	4
Confidence/Competence	1	73	26

[a] = means of 1, 2, or 3

[b] = means of 4 or 5

[c] = means of 6 or 7

Table 2

Item/Events with a Low Desirability Mean and Their Respective Probability and Confidence/Competence Means, Standard Deviations, and Frequency of Means

Item/Event	Desirability	Probability	Confidence
Budget cuts will affect field based programs			
X	2.22	5.31	5.42
SD	1.28	.88	.70
F	40	37	37
Fiscal restraints will force departments to limit number of specialized programs			
X	3.27	5.87	5.22
SD	1.19	.65	.67
F	31	42	41
High school PE classes will continue to have large enrollments			
X	2.07	4.91	5.98
SD	1.20	1.03	.48
F	36	30	44

Table 2 (continued)

Item/Event	Desirability	Probability	Confidence
There is a role conflict between teacher/coach			
X	1.92	5.88	6.05
SD	.79	.89	.82
F	40	44	43
Sports will continue to dominate the well-being scene			
X	3.26	5.05	5.33
SD	1.11	.78	.72
F	32		42
Athletics will be increasingly used for nationalistic and propagandistic purposes			
X	1.92	5.14	5.31
SD	.84	.61	.68
F	34	41	40